

55 U02 The Reality of War
by Dr Douglas J Austin U 02



THE INTERIOR OF THE MAMELON ON THE 9TH OF JUNE.
[*"Illustrated London News"*, 7th July, 1855]

It appears that few (if any) of the photographs taken during the Crimean War truly captured the grim medical realities of the campaign and the appalling horrors of battle. Such photorealistic journalism had to wait until the American Civil War. While the photographers worked under heavy technical constraints - as well as those imposed by their employers and their own tastes - some of the artists were less inhibited. Here is a rare example of the class of work engraved for the popular press. The attack on the Mamelon was a minor affair compared to the final assault on the Malakov work - which led to the seizure of South Sebastopol.

The accompanying ILN text reads as follows:- *"The above Sketch of the interior of the Russian battery as it appeared on the day after the desperate battle in which it was taken by the French is from the pencil of an officer who visited the spot during the brief armistice which took place on that day. In the following letter he describes what he saw:- In order that the thousands who see the Illustrated London News may be better able to form an idea of the struggle in which the army before Sebastopol is engaged, I send you a rough Sketch representing part of the interior of the Mamelon, stormed and taken by our gallant allies the French, on the evening of the 7th of June. I drew each figure and object as it really appeared on the morning of the 9th inst., at the moment a flag of truce was hoisted for the purpose of burying the dead, and before anything had been moved, or the crowd as is usual on these occasions assembled. On the parapet I have tried to represent the body of a young sergeant of the 6th Regiment of the Line, shot through the head, and firmly retaining in death his grasp of a small tricolor flag with which he had encouraged and led on his comrades. In the centre the bodies of one Lieutenant and six privates of the 6th Regiment; on the right, holding on to the top of a gabion, a private of the 50th Regiment, shot in the act of scaling the parapet. In the foreground, a Zouave prostrate on the body of his fallen foe, two Chasseurs de*

Vincennes, three soldiers of the 7th Regiment, and five Russians, in a mass together, shot and bayoneted; a corporal of the 50th, with a "Croix d'Honneur" on his breast, close to which he had received his death wound. And on the left of the Sketch, a Chasseur Indigene, with two bayonet wounds in his breast; and two French soldiers crushed by rocks hurled down upon them by the enemy in his stubborn resistance; a dismounted and spiked Russian gun, Russian and French soldiers' caps, muskets, and bayonets, spades, pickaxes, round-shot, fragments of shell, and grape-shot."

I have no reason to doubt either the chilling accuracy of this image - or its description of 25 corpses...